

compliments of  
Peter Parker  
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## A SHORT NOTICE

OF THE

# DEATH AND CHARACTER OF MR. CALHOUN.

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## MR. CALHOUN.

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*“If I could have but one hour more to speak in the Senate, I could do more good than on any previous occasion of my life.”*

These were among the last words of the lamented Calhoun. How appropriate to a patriot and statesman as the lamp of life was going out. “Save my country, Heaven,” were the dying words of Pitt. We cannot know precisely what Mr. Calhoun would have said in that last hour he wished for, but we are sure he would have spoken with sincerity what he thought, and with the deepest love of country in his heart. This great “Southerner,” and great American too, has passed away; and perhaps since the death of Washington, no death in our country has awakened a sensation so nearly akin in some of its striking characteristics to that which was then produced. We have lost men whilst they were

wielding, or who had in their day wielded, more political power; but not one to whose sheer intellectual and moral pre-eminence, such general tributes seem to have been paid. Washington did not flatter the people. Nor did Calhoun. Both loved republicanism, but both knew that men individually are prone to error, from ignorance, passion, and other causes; and that communities, speaking and acting through their majorities, must often be in error too, and fall into delusions. Calhoun was never afraid to express this sentiment or act upon it. If Washington had not put himself against popular delusions on the subject of the militia and short enlistments, it may be doubted whether he could have carried us through the Revolution, incomparable as were his qualities and powers of achievement otherwise. When the Revolution was finished, his mighty fame overshadowed all competition; but he could hardly be prevailed upon to accept the Chief Magistracy. He yielded at last only to the unanimous, enthusiastic voice of an adoring, grateful, country. As President, party was abashed in his presence. It stood off, and dared not approach him. Calhoun, though belonging to a party, rose above it. It

was his opinion, in our age, that no man could be President unless he pandered to the public, as Bacon said, "Great heights were only to be reached by winding stairs." Calhoun's mind was prophetic, as well as fruitful and profound. He spoke not from passion but knowledge. "Her ample page, rich with the spoils of time," was before him, and he knew how to read it.

Of all Americans, he was almost the only one not overset by the great shock in Europe in 1848. That our citizens should have given the French Republic a cordial first welcome, in order to a trial, if nothing more, and that both Houses of Congress should have done the same, was natural, justifiable, and appeared to be of American obligation. But in the eye of the nation, in his place in the Senate, in the midst of enthusiasm for France, regenerated as was supposed, Calhoun paused. He invoked the resources of his own mind. He reasoned, he reflected. He did not believe that by suddenly "proclaiming" Republics, they were to be made. He knew that all progress was not for the better; and when too rapid, could not be good. The rights of man did not blind him to the nature of man. He knew all excellence to be of slow

growth, with nations as persons ; that it comes of patience, education, long preparation and training ; and more gradually to governments than men. His mind, full of light, inferred that such quick, convulsive, movements in the other hemisphere must be the work, with exceptions the rarest, of a few selfish men in some places, and of what lord John Russell called "A society of circulating revolutionists" in others. The real masses, he believed, would be thrown into a worse condition than before. He saw also that these suddenly "proclaimed" Republics were totally different from ours. His profound study and knowledge of the constitution of the United States, and of every thing anterior that had led to the establishment of our own Republic, taught him this. He believed that the inherent tendencies of these new Republics were to disorder—even to communism ; and he feared their deteriorating influences upon us. More especially did he fear it under our predispositions summarily to applaud all movements against existing authority in Europe, no matter what their nature or who their instruments ; and still the more especially when numerous presses—those oligarchical engines

in this country—not all of them the best fitted, it might be thought, to instruct and direct the public mind of a great nation, are yet so apt to decide in haste, and with a frightful certainty, “where angels fear to tread,” upon all questions that come, foreign or domestic. He appreciated too much the immense value of our Republic to behold without grief the disparagement of even the name abroad, or without dread the recoil upon the very principle of equal rights, of which there was danger from the terrible abuses committed abroad under the cloak of Democracy.

Mr. Calhoun’s ambition was of the noblest, most inspiring kind. It always sought great public ends through noble means. Beautifully, most beautifully, did his colleague say, in announcing his death to the Senate, “We saw him a few days ago in the seat near me, he had so long occupied; we saw the struggle of a great mind to overcome the infirmities of a sinking body; IT WAS THE EXHIBITION OF A WOUNDED EAGLE WITH HIS EYES TURNED TO THE HEAVENS IN WHICH HE HAD SOARED, BUT INTO WHICH HIS WINGS COULD NEVER CARRY HIM AGAIN.” The figure was as happy as touching. No man

was more pure ; rarely a public man as pure. He had the self-reliance of genius fertilizing in its own thoughts, and conscious of its own powers, but without a particle of arrogance or presumption. When, as a democrat of the Jefferson school, he entered Congress before the war of 1812, he soon opposed himself to embargoes and non-intercourse, as weapons unsuited to a brave people in avenging wrongs and insults. Yet, they had been the policy of his party. To arraign it was dangerous at first to popularity. But he did ; he, a young man, bold when boldness was wisdom ; he, a young man, but then as always, frank in all that was high-minded, and chivalrous under all circumstances. He was for drawing the sword against the gigantic mistress of the ocean. He was for throwing ourselves at once upon our courage and exertions. The step was perilous, although one which his broad, sagacious mind told him was as due to an enlightened estimate of national interests, as it was imperiously demanded by outrages upon our national honor —the persevering, shocking outrage of impressment. He would have no more embargoes, no mere non-trading, to stop *that*, to react upon *that* enormity. His speeches in sup-

port of the war lifted up the feelings and judgment of the nation by their combination of fervor and originality, with the impressive eloquence of logic and discipline. His mind was formed to lead in great affairs; to go to the top. It was at the top always that he found his natural element. His erect form at that day, his fine eye, his constant energy and buoyant spirit, blended with a personal courtesy intrinsically and delightfully attractive—who that witnessed all this in him (and there are those of us who did), can ever forget it, or fail, now that his spirit is fled, to exalt to the proper height his manly bearing, devoted patriotism, and whole bright galaxy of his merits? He did honor to Carolina. He was one of the props of the Union. The times were dark. Britain was our foe; her formidable armies upon our shores, just fresh from victory over Napoleon's troops in Spain. Some among our friends quailed, and there were hosts of our own people against us. The vindication of the national rights fell upon the Southern and Middle States—the new-born West co-operating. The North, as States, with splendid exceptions individually, protested against firing a gun. This is history. The

gallant South stood up for the whole Union, on an indiscriminating estimate of duty to the whole, under the unparalleled aggressions of that day. Comparatively, she had scarcely a ship to be plundered, or a seaman to be impressed. Calhoun never faltered. His fidelity to his country's honor, his exertions in her cause, were intense and unremitting. The elder Dallas called him a young Hercules. He never pandered to the public. He largely helped to teach the public how to think. He never disguised his conduct or thoughts. His great competitor of Massachusetts, Mr. Webster, eagerly, magnanimously, made this declaration in the Senate last month. The war fully and gloriously terminated, he afterwards assumed, at the call of Mr. Monroe, the direction of the war department. In that sphere, his administrative abilities were consummate. His brilliant course in the Senate since, has been so eloquently portrayed by his great associates in that chamber, and by speakers in the other House of Congress, that inferior hands are warned not to touch upon it, any more than upon his administration of the department of state, or his career as Vice-President.

Calhoun's whole public life was in harmony with his noble nature. A paramount principle of duty was forever present to him. It was ever the pillar of light. He sought public ends by means varying as facts varied and time interposed. In forty years indeed; in an age of ceaseless activity and change; in the complications of policy and legislation incident to the shifting wants of a young and growing country teeming with production, and still new to many of the operations and schemes of national industry, he may be found the advocate of opinions which he afterwards saw cause to modify, alter, or abandon. So, among his illustrious compeers in the Senate, that band of statesmen really great, and, because they are so, now by universal acclaim looked to as pilots in the national storm that is raging, you might have beheld, all around, those who had been tariff and anti-tariff, in opinion and conduct; bank and anti-bank; strict constructionists and latitudinarians. There is a difference however—it points to the compass and foresight of Calhoun's mind. Death has canonized him, and it may be spoken. He ended for free-trade; the principle to which the most enlightened and prosperous nations of the earth seem at length

to be assenting. And he ended a strict constructionist of the enactments and guarantees, we say *guarantees* (no less than compromises) of the constitution; the doctrine which time and experience seem more and more to have consecrated as the best if not only one for giving perpetuity to the Union of these States.

We do not design in this imperfect tribute, to decide upon all the opinions of this remarkable man and great statesman, though we might be slow to condemn some that others may have condemned; but we consider the removal of such a public man from among us, as a public calamity. Jefferson loved him, Madison loved him, Monroe loved him. The two latter confided in his counsels. All three honored him. Nor is it that we have been deprived of great talents that his loss is chiefly to be deplored, his memory to be ever revered. Talents, and great talents, are never wanting in the world. We have them here. In France you cannot count them up; their name is legion—thrice, and again. In Germany, in England, in all great countries, they are exuberant. It is like the fame of heroes, which led an able writer\* to remark fifty

\* Fisher Ames.

years ago that it was “Growing vulgar: heroes multiplied in every war, and stood so thick in their ranks in history as to be nearly undistinguishable from their soldiers.” But high, resolute, uncompromising virtue, is another thing. It is of the gods. Mortals look up to it and do it homage, though it is so seldom that they can reach it. It was the virtue of Washington—his immaculate integrity, honor and truth in all things, the extraordinary moral grandeur, almost more than human, centering in him and crowning all his actions—which induced an eloquent commentator, in summing up the complicated excellence of his character, side by side with great names of antiquity and among the moderns, to exclaim, that in weighing *his* merits, “No future Plutarch must attempt the iniquity of parallel.”\*

How durable, how expansive, how god-like, the homage rendered to virtue! It was Washington’s towering supremacy in this, that has placed him at the head of mankind. Without it, all his other transcendent deeds for us might have left his reputation in an orb no better than Cæsar’s, Cromwell’s or Napoleon’s. This

\* Funeral Discourse on Washington, delivered in New York 22d February, 1800, by the Rev. John M. Mason.

it was which prompted the most gifted genius perhaps in France, the nation in whose streets and highways you may daily meet generals famous in battle on a hundred fields, and statesmen of ability as numerous, to ejaculate, in despair perhaps of seeing his country regenerated in '48, "THAT THE WANT OF THE AGE WAS A EUROPEAN WASHINGTON."\* The talents of Calhoun, commanding as they were, it might be thought could be matched. But not easily can the strength and steadiness of his virtue be matched. Not easily his exemption from all that was underhand. Not so easily his scorn of all pandering to the public, as the price of his own exaltation. In all this the highest earthly praise can be justly bestowed by saying, THE SOUL OF WASHINGTON WAS IN HIM.

A few concluding words. Our material prosperity has been amazing, and the increase of our power. Is it as certain that political morals increase in our land? There are minds that might be slow in coming to an affirmative answer. There are anxious minds, that "dote yet doubt," fearing that our

\* Lamartine.

tendency will be downward. The widening arena of the contests for the Presidency, and augmenting train of passions, intrigues, disappointments, exasperations, bitter exasperations, which they foment, seem enough, without other foreshadowings of ill flung across our path, to generate anxiety in the bosoms of the reflecting. If in all or any of these there be danger, let every occasion be seized of averting it. Let the death of Calhoun be improved as one of them. Let our young men imitate him in the loftiness of his moral course, as the best public safeguard. That principle is one of the grand inculcations embalmed in Washington's immortal farewell address, as interwoven with national perpetuity. Calhoun's example will be a high one to our young men. Let it be their ambition to imitate it; their vow. To such, determined to be great, and high in their present aspirations, as he was when young, and devoting themselves to severe study and self-discipline, as he did when young, it may, it will, make a call for inward conflicts to adhere to such an example. But let the motive be of strength sufficient to secure to them a victory so precious. A great country is to be in their hands. Its

institutions, its freedom, its resources, its past and prospective renown, open to it a magnificent future. But not if subordinate men with cunning minds bear sway. This would lower our destiny. This would, must, in the sequel, undermine it, blast it, for all that is truly great and glorious in nations; all that is highest, purest, brightest, most lasting. And this withering of our high hopes would come to pass, though our fields might continue to produce their crops, our workshops their fabrics, our seaports ships and steamers, our mines gold, and our population run on until we equal the Chinese.

The Senate has resolved that at the call of his afflicted family, the remains of Mr. Calhoun are to be removed for interment in the bosom of his native State. They will be in charge of the Sergeant-at-Arms. A deputation of Senators is to form the solemn escort. In that State repose the ashes of the Marions, the Sumpters, the Laurenses, the Gadsdens, the Pinckneys, the Lowndeses, the Rutledges. These are among her illustrious dead.

“ By fairy hands their knell is rung,  
By forms unseen their dirge is sung.”

The ashes of Calhoun will confirm, to late

ages, the immortality of the sacred heap. Like Germanicus, he departed in life to return in death; and as the ashes of the great Roman were borne back to Italy, so will be those of Calhoun to his beloved Carolina. Mourning crowds will await their approach. Melancholy will be upon every countenance. All classes will assemble. The State will weep. The widowed partner of his heart will be in the thoughts of all, deepening the general gloom —as when Agrippina was seen bearing the urn of Germanicus. But let her, let all, take consolation in the certainty that his tomb will be as a place of pilgrimage, from which the youth of Carolina, and of the nation, may catch the inspirations of genius, of patriotism and of virtue.

TEMPLE.

*Philadelphia County,*  
*April 10, 1850.*





